

KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

MINUTES of the Annual Meeting of the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority held on Friday 5 July 2024 at Kent Fire and Rescue Service HQ, The Godlands, Straw Mill Hill, Tovil Maidstone ME15 6XB.

PRESENT:- Mr A Booth, Mr N Chard, Mr P Harman, Ms S Hohler, Ms J Meade, Ms C Parfitt-Reid, Mr M Prenter, Mr C Simkins, Mr M Sole.

APOLOGIES: - Mr P Barrington-King, Mr A Brady, Mr D Beaney, Mr P Cole, Mr N Collor, Mr D Crow-Brown, Mr M Dendor, Mr M Hood, Mr D Jeffrey, Mr B Kemp, Mr S Manion, Mr J McInroy, Mr A Ridgers, Mr V Maple, Mr B Sweetland, Ms Z Van-Dyke and Mr M Scott, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner

OFFICERS:- The Chief Executive, Miss A Millington; the Director, Finance and Corporate Services, Mrs A Hartley; the Director, Response and Resilience, Mr M Rist; Director Protection, Prevention and Customer Engagement, Mr J Quinn; Director, HR and Culture, Ms L Jell, Assistant Director, Response, Mr M Deadman; Assistant Director, Resilience, Mr C Else; Head of Finance and Pensions, Mr B Fullbrook; Head of Policy, Dr O Thompson and the Clerk to the Authority, Mrs M Curry.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: - Ms C Valmond, Monitoring Officer, Ms H Ward, Deputy Monitoring Officer

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Election of Chair for 2024/25

(Item A1)

- (1) Ms S Hohler moved, Ms C Parfitt-Reid seconded, that Mr Chard be elected Chair of the Authority.
- (2) There being no other nominations Mr N Chard was declared the elected Chair of the Authority for 2024/25.

2. Election of Vice-Chair for 2023/24

(Item A2)

- (1) Mr N Chard moved, Mr A Booth seconded, that Mr B Kemp be elected Vice-Chair of the Authority.
- (2) There being no other nominations Mr B Kemp was declared the elected Vice-Chair of the Authority for 2024/25.

3. Chair's Announcements

(Item A3)

- (1) The Chair welcomed Dan McManus, Kent's Service Liaison Lead for HMICFRS, to the meeting.
- (2) The Chair welcomed Claudette Valmond, the Authority's Monitoring Officer, to the meeting.

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- (3) The Chair welcomed Helen Ward, the Authority's Deputy Monitoring Officer to the meeting.
- (4) The Chair gave thanks and best wishes on behalf of the Authority to Mark Rist, Director Response and Resilience on his retirement.
- (5) The Chair, on behalf of Members, congratulated Matthew Deadman on his appointment as Mark Rist's successor as Director Response and Resilience.
- (6) The Chair, on behalf of Members, congratulated Lyndsey Jell on being appointed as Director Human Resources and Culture.
- (7) The Chair, on behalf of Members, congratulated Barrie Fullbrook on the position of Interim Director Finance as the current Director Finance and Corporate Services heads towards retirement next year.
- (8) The Chair informed the Authority that Members of the Senior Officer Appointment, Conditions and Conduct Committee agreed these transitional positions to assist the service with its succession planning due to impending retirements.

4. Membership

(Item A4)

- (1) The list of Members appointed by the constituent Councils to serve on the Authority for 2024/25 was noted.

5. Audit and Governance Committee – 29 January 2024

(Item A6)

- (1) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the Minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee meeting held on 29 January 2024, be noted.

6. Minutes of the Authority – 20 February 2024

(Item A7)

- (1) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the Minutes of the Authority meeting held on 20 February be approved and signed as a true record.

7. Senior Officer Appointment, Conditions and Conduct Committee – 9 April 2024

(Item A8)

- (1) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the minutes of the Senior Officer Appointment and Conditions Committee held on 9 April 2024, be noted.

8. Appointment to Committees and Outside Bodies for 2024/25

(Item B1 - Report by Clerk to the Authority)

- (1) The Authority reviewed its scheme of proportionality as required by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, and then considered various matters relating to the appointment of Members to Committees and outside bodies for 2024/25.
- (2) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) for the purposes of the statutory annual review of proportionality, and without any Member voting against, the allocation of places to the political groups on the Senior Officer Appointment, Conditions and Conduct Committee and the Audit and Governance Committee as detailed in paragraphs 5 and 6 and shown in Table 1 of the report, be approved for 2024/25.
 - (b) If and when a Hearings Panel is needed in 2024/25, it should comprise of six Members (the majority drawn from the administration and one representative from each of the other political parties), be approved.
 - (c) the Authority continues in the membership of the outside bodies to which it currently belongs, and the allocation of places and voting rights on the LGA General Assembly between the political groups, as shown in Table 2 to the report, be approved for 2024/25.

9. Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)

(Item B2 – Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) Members were presented with the Authority's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) document together with its strategic priorities and enabling plans for the next four-year strategy period. This document follows the risk analysis and assessment document 'Creating a Safer Future – Together' that was approved at the Authority meeting in February.
- (2) The covering report for the CRMP document also contained details of an extensive evaluation carried out against the strategies for the last strategy period 2021-2024 as well as a proposed change to the cycle of public consultation timetable.
- (3) The Chair said it was pleasing to see an increase in the responses to the public consultation.
- (4) Mr Booth asked how technology is playing its part in supporting firefighting techniques in buildings. The Assistant Director Response explained that the Service has several drones and have been using this type of technology for the past 10 years which does help greatly in command situations. The Assistant Director Response also explained that the Service is in the process of purchasing a remote-control robot which will be equipped with hose and firefighting equipment. This provides advantages to support firefighting at incidents where colleagues would need to be rotated on hose lines. He added that the Authority is in contact with the New York Fire Department, learning from them and the robotics they use at incidents.
- (5) Mr Booth asked if and when the Authority gets involved in the consultation phase of any building design and used the expansion of schools as an example. Director, Protection,

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Prevention and Customer Engagement said that our Fire Engineering team regularly review consultations that come into the Service and have specific engineers that look at building design. The team liaise with architects, developers and building control. However, he added that the Authority is not a statutory consultee for new school builds or expansions, which does present problems. He said that the Education team do go in to schools to do fire safety talks and we are changing our approach to this based on the school curriculum. The team also support teachers with providing fire safety information.

- (6) Ms Meade complimented officers on an excellent CRMP. She said that she would advocate the Authority being a consultee on school buildings and would like to have a further discussion with officers on how to take this forward.
- (7) Members congratulated officers and colleagues for their exceptional work which can clearly be seen in the evaluation document of the last four-year plan.
- (8) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the CRMP delivery plan and strategic priorities and enabling plans set out for the next four-year strategy period, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.
 - (b) the contents of the extensive evaluation conducted against the strategies for the last strategy period 2021-2024, detailed in Appendix 2 to the report, be noted.
 - (c) the change to the cycle of public consultation for the CRMP as detailed within the report, be approved.

10. Governance and Policy Update

(Item B3 – Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) The Authority considered a report on a number of governance issues such as
 - A. Revised approach to governance over policy approval
 - B. Policies that require Members' approval and then policies for Members' information
 - C. Modern Slavery and Transparency in Supply Chains Statement for 2023/24
 - D. Legislative Update
- (2) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the revised approach to governance over policy approval as detailed in the report, be approved.
 - (b) the listed policies for Members' approval as detailed in the report and Appendices 1- 3, be approved.
 - (c) the Modern Slavery and Transparency in Supply Chains Statement for 2023/24, as detailed in the report and attached at Appendix 4, be approved.
 - (d) the remaining contents of the report, be noted.

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11. Treasury Management Year End Report for 2023/24

(Item B4 – Report by Director Finance and Corporate Services)

- (1) The Authority considered a report on its treasury management activities as well as the estimated and actual prudential and treasury indicators for the year. A provisional outturn report was provided to Members of the Audit and Governance Committee at its meeting in April 2024 and this report concludes the final outturn now that the 2023-24 financial statements have been finalised.
- (2) Members congratulated the Director Finance and Corporate Services and her team for the excellent management of the Authority's budget.
- (3) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the year-end report on treasury management activities for 2023/24, be approved.

12. Provisional Final Outturn for 2023/24

(Item B5 – Report by Director Finance and Corporate Services)

- (1) The Authority considered a report which detailed the provisional outturn on revenue and capital spends for the 2023/24 financial year as well as details of the proposed resultant transfers from earmarked reserved to fund the final overspend on the revenue budget.
- (2) The report covered in detail the provisional revenue budget outturn of an underspend of £2.922m against a budget of £85.292m. The underspend has increased by £170k since the last forecast presented to Members in February where a forecast underspend of £2.752m was reported.
- (3) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the transfer of £1.5m of the final revenue budget underspend to the Insurance and Resource Reserve, be approved.
 - (b) the transfer of £0.4m of the final revenue budget underspend to the Service Transformation and Productivity Reserve, be approved.
 - (c) the remaining underspend (provisionally £1.022m) be transferred to the Infrastructure Reserve, be approved.
 - (d) the remaining contents of the report be noted.

13. Financial Summary Update 2024/25

(Item B6 - Report by Director Finance and Corporate Services)

- (1) The Authority considered the first report for the 2024/25 financial year which provided an overview of the spend against the revenue and capital budgets forecasted so far this year.
- (2) The report also provided details of the nationally agreed pay award for operational colleagues for 2024/25 as well as a number of other financial related issues.
- (3) RESOLVED that: -

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- (a) the proposed drawdown from the Insurance and Resource Reserve to fund the additional cost of the nationally agreed pay awards for operational colleagues for 2024/25, should there be a requirement to balance the budget from reserves at the end of the financial year, be approved.
- (b) the remaining contents of the report be noted.

14. Appointment of an Independent Person for Standards

(Item B7 – Report by Clerk to the Authority)

- (1) Under Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011, the Authority must include provision for the appointment of at least one Independent Person whose views must be sought, and considered, before a decision is made on any allegation of misconduct against a Member of the Authority.
- (2) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the reappointment of Jennifer Waterman, as the Authority's Independent Person for Standards, for a four-year term until the Authority's AGM in 2028 be approved.

15. Appointment of Monitoring Officer

(Item B8 – Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) It is a statutory requirement for the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority to appoint a Monitoring Officer to carry out the responsibilities set out in legislation.
- (2) The Authority received a report detailing the work involved in securing a Monitoring Officer provision from Mid Kent Legal Services.
- (3) Members also received a letter from Claudette Valmond, Head of Legal Services, seeking permission to appoint a Deputy Monitoring Officer to the Authority.
- (4) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the appointment of Claudette Valmond, Head of Mid Kent Legal Services, as the Authority's Monitoring Officer under the conditions defined within the Service Level Agreement, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.
 - (b) the provision with Mid Kent Legal Services will be reviewed annually to ensure that performance is met by both parties and subject to agreeing further collaboration, a recommendation will come back to the Authority for consideration on any possible extension of this contract, be approved.
 - (c) The appointment of Helen Ward as the Deputy Monitoring Officer to the Authority, be approved.

16. Pensions Overview and Discretions

(Item B9 – Presentation by Head of Finance, Treasury and Pensions)

- (1) The Authority received a presentation which gave an overview of the different types of Fire and Rescue Pension Schemes as well as the work required by this Authority to administer the changes required as a result of national legal cases.
- (2) Within each pension scheme there are a number of discretions which are left to the Authority to agree the policy to be applied. In order that the effective administration of these changes can be carried out by the Scheme Manager, Members were requested to agree further amendments to the Authority's current discretions.
- (3) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) The application of any discretion will require the collective approval of the Chief Executive, Director of Finance and the Director of HR, be approved.
 - (b) If the net cost of applying a discretion exceeds £50k per year, on an individual case basis, this will require prior Member agreement, be approved.
 - (c) All other financial commitments will be approved in line with existing schemes of delegation, be approved.

17. Activity Update

(Item C1 – Presentation from Director Response and Resilience and Director Prevention, Protection, Customer Engagement and Safety)

- (1) The Authority received a presentation on a noteworthy operational incident which covered the firefighting and rescue techniques that were employed, the equipment and resources used and what was learnt as a result of the incident.
- (2) As part of the presentation there was also an overview on the building safety activities in relation to a high-risk premises in Canterbury. Within this presentation there was a demonstration on new technology encompassing 3D imaginary which gave Members an insight to the complexities in terms of the layout of the building being discussed. The Authority is trialling this technology to support future building safety activities.
- (3) Members thanked both the Director Response and Resilience and Director Protection, Prevention and Customer Engagement for the informative presentation.
- (4) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) The contents of the presentation be noted.

18. Information Update

(Item C1 – Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) The Authority considered information updates on: -
 - A. Inspection Update
 - B. Performance Update
 - C. Response and Resilience Update

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- D. Protection, Prevention and Customer Engagement Update
- E. Freedom of Information Update
- F. Pensions and Pension Board Update

(2) RESOLVED that: -

- (a) The contents of the report be noted.